

Infection Prevention Guide for Outpatient Settings

Overall Messages:

- Patients deserve safe care anywhere healthcare is provided, including outpatient settings.
- CDC has packaged recommendations for outpatient settings into a single document to summarize essential infection prevention practices.
- The recommendations represent the minimum expectations for safe care in outpatient settings related to basic infection prevention.
 - Outpatient settings are facilities where patients do not stay overnight, e.g. hospital-based outpatient departments and clinics, non-hospital based clinics and physician offices, urgent care centers, ambulatory surgical centers, public health clinics, imaging centers, oncology clinics, ambulatory behavioral health and substance abuse clinics, and physical therapy and rehabilitation centers.
- Failure to follow Standard Precautions, such as safe injection practices violates basic patient safety and cannot be tolerated.

Key Points:

CDC's *Infection Prevention Guide for Outpatient Settings* reminds healthcare providers of the basic infection prevention practices they must follow to protect their patients and themselves.

- The guide distills existing, evidence-based recommendations from CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC)

Ongoing outbreaks and patient notifications resulting from unsafe practices in outpatient settings highlight the need for better infection prevention across our entire healthcare system, not just in hospital settings.

To provide safe care, at a minimum **healthcare providers should:**

- Recognize their responsibility to implement safe care practices
- Practice good **hand hygiene** – including use of alcohol-based hand rubs or hand washing with soap and water, to reduce the risk of spreading infections
- Ensure **safe medical injection practices** are followed
 - Use aseptic techniques when preparing and giving medications
 - Needles and syringes are single-use devices and should not be used for more than one patient or reused to draw additional medication
 - Do not administer medications from a single-dose vial or IV bag to multiple patients
 - Limit the use of multi-dose vials and dedicate them to a single patient whenever possible

- Follow procedures for the **safe handling of potentially contaminated medical equipment**
 - Reusable medical equipment should be cleaned and reprocessed appropriately before using on another patient

To provide safe care, at a minimum **facilities should:**

- Develop and maintain infection prevention and occupational health programs
- Assure sufficient and appropriate supplies necessary for adherence to Standard Precautions (e.g. hand hygiene products, personal protective equipment, injection equipment)
- Assure at least one individual with training in infection prevention is employed by or regularly available to the facility
- Develop written infection prevention policies and procedures appropriate for the services provided by the facility and based upon evidence-based guidelines, regulations, or standards
- Provide job- or task-specific infection prevention education and training to all healthcare professionals
- Adhere to local, state, and federal requirements regarding healthcare-associated infection surveillance, reportable diseases, and outbreak reporting
- Perform regular audits and competency evaluations of staff's adherence to infection prevention practices
- Utilize CDC's infection prevention checklist for outpatient settings to assess infection control practices

Be aware that consequences of failure to adhere to recommended practices include:

- Putting patients at risk for infection
- Malpractice suits filed by patients
- Loss of business license, certification, and/or reimbursement
- Referral of healthcare personnel to licensing boards for disciplinary action

To ensure safe care **patients should:**

- Speak up.
Talk to your doctor about any worries you have about your safety and ask them what they are doing to protect you from acquiring an infection in their facility.
- Keep hands clean.
If you do not see your nurses and doctors clean their hands, ask them to do so. Also remind your loved ones. They want to prevent infections just like you do. Cleansing hands can prevent the spread of germs.
- Ask your healthcare provider, "Will there be a new needle and a new syringe used to draw my medication?" Healthcare providers should never reuse a needle or syringe on more than one patient.

CDC is committed to helping ensure all patients receive safe care every time they visit an outpatient medical facility. CDC has and will continue to:

- Provide evidence-based guidance for the prevention of infections in outpatient healthcare facilities

- Work with partners and professional organizations to ensure healthcare personnel have the information and resources needed to prevent infections
- Work with federal and state partners to ensure that minimum safe care practices are consistently maintained or exceeded and that healthcare providers are held accountable for effective infection prevention

Background:

Excerpt from the *CDC Infection Prevention Guide for Outpatient Settings* :

Over the past several decades, we have witnessed a significant shift in healthcare delivery from the acute, inpatient hospital setting to a variety of ambulatory and community-based settings. Americans have frequent encounters with ambulatory care. For example, more than three-quarters of all operations in the United States are performed on an outpatient basis^[1]. In addition, between 1995 and 2007, the average person made three visits each year to physician offices^[2]. By 2007, the total number of physician office visits approached one billion^[3]. Vulnerable patient populations rely on frequent and intensive use of ambulatory care to maintain or improve their health. For example, each year more than one million cancer patients receive outpatient chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or both^[4]. It is critical that all of this care be provided under conditions that minimize or eliminate risks of healthcare-associated infections (HAI).

1. Barie PS. Infection Control Practices in Ambulatory Surgical Centers. JAMA. 2010;303:2295-2297
2. National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2009: With Special Features on Medical Technology. Hyattsville, MD. 2010.
3. Hsiao CJ, Cherry DK, Beatty PC, Rechsteiner EA. National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey: 2007 summary. National Health Statistics Reports; no 27. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2010.
4. Halpern MT, Yabroff KR. Prevalence of Outpatient Cancer Treatment in the United States: Estimates from the Medical Panel Expenditures Survey (MEPS). Cancer Investigation. 2008;26:647-651.